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NEW WHEATGRASS BOSTS CATTLE WEIGHTS, PROFITS

WASHINGTON—The legacy of a long-dead Soviet scientist is coming to life this month with the release of Manska, a new wheatgrass for grazing that could put extra pounds on steers and extra dollars in cattle producers' pockets.

Seeds for Manska, which takes its name from a contraction of "Mandan" and "Nebraska," were donated to the United States in 1936 by Nikolai Ivanovich Vavilov, the Russian germplasm pioneer. Vavilov died January 26, 1943, in a Siberian labor camp.

Manska is being released cooperatively by the Agricultural Research Service and the Soil Conservation Service, agencies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the state agricultural experiment stations of Nebraska and North Dakota. Certified seed growers can obtain Manska foundation seed from the Bismarck Plant Materials Center operated by USDA's Soil Conservation Service in Bismarck, N.D. Commercial seed should be available to farmers by 1993.

Tests have shown that cattle can digest a higher percentage of forage from Manska wheatgrass than from the popular Oahe and Slate varieties now grown in the central and northern Great Plains. The small increase in digestibility, less than 5 percent, could result in cattle gaining almost a half-pound per day more on Manska, according to ARS plant geneticist Kenneth P. Vogel.

"In 30 days, these steers could gain an extra 15 pounds," said Vogel, who works at the ARS Wheat, Sorghum and Forage Research unit at Lincoln, Neb.

The seeds that ultimately resulted in Manska, along with other forage germplasm donated by Vavilov were tested widely across the United States by the Soil Conservation Service, ARS' Bureau of Plant Industry, and several state agricultural experiment stations.

"Over the years, seed from Vavilov's original introduction was intermated with other wheatgrass varieties and lost its identity," said John D. Berdahl, an ARS plant geneticist at Mandan who helped develop the new grass.

Linda Cooke (309) 685-4011

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UNITED STATES TO PROVIDE FOOD AID TO ESTONIA, LATVIA AND LITHUANIA

WASHINGTON, May 29—Secretary of Agriculture Edward Madigan today announced agreements to provide $5 million in food aid each to Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania under Title I of Public Law 480—the Food for Peace Program.

"These agreements will allow Estonia and Latvia each to purchase approximately 31,000 metric tons of U.S. wheat, and Lithuania to purchase approximately 23,000 tons of U.S. soybean meal," Madigan said. "This aid illustrates the continued U.S. commitment to helping all three independent nations make the difficult transition to a market economy."

The wheat will supplement the human food supplies in Estonia and Latvia. The soybean meal will help meet Lithuania's animal feed needs.

Madigan said P.L. 480 assistance also is important because it helps establish and maintain U.S. share in overseas agricultural markets.

The Food for Peace Program is a food aid and market development program operated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Foreign Agricultural Service in cooperation with USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation.

Title I of the program authorizes government-to-government concessional sales, which combine low interest rates and repayment terms of up to 30 years on financing to purchase specified U.S. agricultural products.

The supply period for all three agreements is fiscal 1992. Purchase authorizations will be announced as issued and sales will be made by private U.S. traders on a competitive bid basis.

For more information, contact Jim Higgiston or Casey Bean at (202) 720-5319. For operational details call (202) 720-5780.

Lynn Goldsbrough (202) 720-0328

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EXPORT FORECAST IS SECOND HIGHEST ON RECORD

WASHINGTON, May 29—The U.S. Department of Agriculture today raised its forecast for fiscal 1992 U.S. agricultural exports to $41 billion, up $1 billion from the February outlook.

Secretary of Agriculture Edward Madigan said the figure is the second highest agricultural export value ever, surpassed only by the fiscal 1981 figure of $43.8 billion.

"The overall 1992 export outlook has improved for U.S. soybeans, coarse grains, livestock products, and horticultural products," Madigan said. "This improvement shows that U.S. farmers can't be beat when it comes to providing high-quality foods and feeds at competitive prices.

"The $1 billion increase also translates into benefits for the U.S. economy as a whole—including another 27,000 jobs."

Of the annual gain forecast today, wheat, soybean products and horticultural products account for nearly all of the $3.5 billion increase over fiscal 1991, when exports were $37.5 billion. Both U.S. horticultural and livestock products are forecast for record levels, at $6.8 billion and $5.6 billion, respectively.

USDA also today raised its forecast for annual export volume from 129.4 million tons to 140.0 million tons.

In addition, USDA raised its forecast for U.S. agricultural imports to a record $23 billion, up $1 billion from the February figure. Madigan said stronger-than-expected domestic economic growth accounted for the higher import level.

Even with the higher level of imports, the U.S. agricultural trade surplus is expected to widen more than $3 billion in fiscal 1992 to $18 billion, the largest agricultural trade surplus since fiscal 1989.

Lynn K. Goldsbrough (202) 720-3448

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USDA ANNOUNCES 1993 WHEAT PROGRAM PROVISIONS

WASHINGTON, May 29—Secretary of Agriculture Edward Madigan today announced a zero percent acreage reduction program for the 1993 wheat crop. Therefore, in order to obtain price support loan and deficiency payments with respect to the 1993 crop of wheat, producers on farms which have a wheat crop acreage base will not be required to devote any acreage on the farm to approved conservation use.

This level was chosen from the statutory range of 0 to 15 percent "to ensure sufficient supplies of U.S. wheat for domestic and export needs," Madigan said.

"We want our farmers to recognize the committment to exports behind this decision," he said. "We will continue to be a reliable supplier of wheat and we will sell that wheat into world markets. We are committed to being competitive, using the Export Enhancement Program and all other export promotion authorities at our disposal."

Madigan also announced other provisions for the 1993 wheat program:

— The established target price is $4.00 per bushel, unchanged from 1992.

— The price support loan and purchase rate is $2.45 per bushel.

— A paid land diversion will not be implemented.

— Other provisions will be announced at a later date.

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USDA EXPANDS SIX RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT AREAS

WASHINGTON, June 1—Six Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Areas in six states have been expanded as part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's rural revitalization efforts.

The expansions add 13 counties and 10.8 million acres to RC&D areas in Arizona, Arkansas, Michigan, Nevada, Pennsylvania and Texas.

"We are looking forward to working with more communities as we assist local people in improving their economy and the environment," said William Richards, chief of USDA's Soil Conservation Service.

Administered by SCS, the RC&D program was established 30 years ago to work with local RC&D councils in improving resource

conservation and economic opportunities in designated RC&D areas. USDA provides each area with a project coordinator.

Under the program, local RC&D councils set their own conservation and development goals and identify agencies, groups, and foundations to fund and carry out specific RC&D projects.

Council members represent soil and water conservation districts, towns, county governments, water districts and other nonprofit groups.

Councils have broad authority to seek help from the sources they believe are best qualified to provide assistance. Such help may be technical assistance from USDA agencies or other federal agencies, state and local governments, local conservation districts, or private industry. Financial assistance is obtained through a variety of donation, loan, grant and cost-sharing programs.

Typical council projects include improving community facilities such as hospitals, schools, and water and sewage treatment plants; developing recreational facilities; controlling erosion; and constructing flood protection.

The RC&D areas being expanded are:

State	Name of RC&D Area	Added Counties
Arizona	Coronado	Pima
Arkansas	Arkansas River Valley	Montgomery
Michigan	Sauk Trails	Allegan
Nevada	Carson-Walker	Pyramid Lake Paiute Indian Reservation; and the part of the Walker River Paiute Indian Reservation which is in Mineral County
Pennsylvania	Endless Mountains	Lycoming
Texas	Northeast Texas	Camp, Cass, Franklin, Hopkins, Marion, Morris, Rains, and Titus

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AFRICANIZED HONEYBEES EXPECTED IN FOUR STATES

WASHINGTON, June 1—Africanized honeybees can be expected to spread to as many as four more states—Arizona, California, New Mexico and Louisiana—over the next 18 to 24 months, according to a U.S. Department of Agriculture scientist.

How quickly the Africanized honeybees spread will depend on the weather and on geographic obstacles such as desert areas that offer no food or shelter to the swarming bees, said Anita Collins, a geneticist working on the bees. She heads the Honey Bee Research Unit at the Subtropical Agricultural Research Laboratory operated in Weslaco, Texas, by USDA's Agricultural Research Service.

"If the weather is very dry or extremely wet during the coming fall or spring swarming seasons, the Africanized honeybees are not going to move as far," Collins said.

She said New Mexico can expect the most likely route to be along the Rio Grande River. Arizona will probably see the bees spreading north from Mexico through irrigated farmland.

California may face a two-pronged spread, she said. Africanized honeybees that move north along the Pacific coast of Mexico eventually will reach southwestern California. Others may spread west from Arizona.

Collins said the route along the California-Arizona border is complicated by the desert geography of the region. It has many pockets that offer little in the way of food resources to support the bees' movement.

"We could start seeing the first swarms in southern California by the fall of 1993 or the spring of 1994," she said.

And in Louisiana, the bees' eastward spread from Texas could bring them into the state by the end of fall 1993 or the beginning of spring 1994.

As of May this year, Africanized honeybees have been found in a band across southern Texas from Corpus Christi in the east through San Antonio to Del Rio in the west.

San Antonio's first swarm of Africanized bees was confirmed on April 28 by the ARS Bee Research Laboratory in Beltsville, Md. This puts the leading edge of the Africanized honeybee swarm 275 miles from the spot in Hidalgo, Texas, where they were first found in the United States in October 1990.

Among the honey bee swarms caught in ARS trap lines along the Texas-Mexico border, a surprisingly low percentage has been Africanized honey bees, according to Collins.

"At the end of the fall 1991 swarming season, about 60 percent of the swarms we were catching were probably Africanized. Early in this spring's swarming season, it's probably only about 30 percent Africanized," she said.

Collins said a possible explanation for the lower number of Africanized honeybees is the exceptionally mild winter, with enough rain to create a flush of blooming plants. "This may have given our local honeybees a chance to get their population up."

She said the presence of a strong population of European-descended or domestic honey bees is considered one of the best ways to mitigate the effects of Africanized honeybees.

Kim Kaplan (301) 504-6504

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CCC INTEREST RATE FOR JUNE 4-1/4 PERCENT

WASHINGTON, June 1—Commodity loans disbursed in June by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Commodity Credit Corporation will carry a 4-1/4 percent interest rate, according to Keith Bjerke, executive vice president of the CCC.

The 4-1/4 percent interest rate is down from May's 4-3/8 percent and reflects the interest rate charged CCC by the U.S. Treasury in June.

Kimberly Somerville (202) 720-6787

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USDA PROPOSES NATIONAL ACCREDITATION OF VETERINARIANS

WASHINGTON, June 2—The U.S. Department of Agriculture is proposing a uniform national program, administered by its Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, to replace veterinary accreditation at the state level.

"National standards would allow accredited veterinarians to perform federal veterinary service in several states," said Billy G. Johnson,

APHIS' deputy administrator for veterinary services. "The current system of accreditation requires veterinarians who move, work near state borders, or work in several states to be accredited by each of those states."

Currently, state-accredited veterinarians are authorized by APHIS to work as agents of the federal government in the field of regulatory animal health. Approximately 45,000 accredited veterinarians now practice in the United States, with 2,000 additional applicants approved each year. Accreditation standards supplement state licensing standards, which certify the medical competency of veterinarians.

The proposed rule would replace a state's written test component of accreditation with a comprehensive evaluation of an applicant's ability to perform standard veterinary procedures. Applicants would be required to attend an approved orientation program covering federal animal health rules, laws, and regulations, as well as the ethical and professional responsibilities of accredited veterinarians.

In addition, the proposed rule clarifies reaccreditation procedures, as well as the penalties for violations of accreditation standards.

The proposal for national accreditation of veterinarians will be in the June 4 Federal Register. Comments will be accepted if they are received on or before July 6.

An original and three copies of written comments referring to Docket Number 91-027 should be sent to Chief, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD, APHIS, USDA, Room 804 Federal Building, 6505 Belcrest Road, Hyattsville, Md. 20782. Comments may be inspected at USDA, Rm. 1141-S, 14th and Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, D.C., between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays.

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USDA RELEASES COST OF FOOD AT HOME FOR APRIL

WASHINGTON, June 3—Here is the U.S. Department of Agriculture's monthly update of the weekly cost of food at home for April 1992:

Cost of food at home for a week in April 1992

	Food plans (In Dollars)			
	Thrifty	Low-cost	Moderate cost	Liberal
Families:				
Family of 2 (20-50 years)	49.60	63.00	77.60	96.60
Family of 2 (51 years and over)	47.10	60.60	74.70	89.20
Family of 4 with preschool children	72.20	90.70	110.60	136.10
Family of 4 with elementary schoolchildren	82.80	106.50	132.80	160.10
Individuals in four-person families:				
Children:				
1-2 years	13.10	16.00	18.60	22.60
3-5 years	14.00	17.40	21.50	25.70
6-8 years	17.20	23.00	28.70	33.50
9-11 years	20.50	26.20	33.60	38.80
Males:				
12-14 years	21.30	29.60	36.90	43.30
15-19 years	22.00	30.60	38.00	44.00
20-50 years	23.70	30.50	37.90	46.00
51 and over	21.50	29.00	35.60	42.70
Females:				
12-19 years	21.40	25.70	31.10	37.60
20-50 years	21.40	26.80	32.60	41.80
51 and over	21.30	26.10	32.30	38.40

USDA's Human Nutrition Information Service computes the cost of food home for four food plans—thrifty, low-cost, moderate-cost, and liberal.

Sue Ann Ritchko, HNIS administrator, said the plans consist of foods that provide well-balanced meals and snacks for a week.

In computing the costs, USDA assumes all food is bought at the store and prepared at home. Costs do not include alcoholic beverages, pet food, soap, cigarettes, paper goods and other nonfood items bought at the store.

"USDA costs are only guides to spending," Ritchko said. "Families may spend more or less, depending on such factors as where they buy their food, how carefully they plan and buy, whether some food is produced at home, what foods the family likes, and how much food is prepared at home."

"Most families will find the moderate-cost or low-cost plan suitable," she said. "The thrifty plan, which USDA uses to set the coupon allotment in the food stamp program, is for families who have tighter budgets. Families with unlimited resources might use the liberal plan."

To use the chart to estimate your family's food costs:

—For members eating all meals at home—or carried from home—use the amounts shown in the chart.

—For members eating some meals out, deduct 5 percent for each meal eaten away from home from the amount shown for the appropriate family member. Thus, for a person eating lunch out 5 days a week, subtract 25 percent, or one-fourth the cost shown.

—For guests, add 5 percent of the amount shown for the proper age group for each meal.

Costs in the second part of the chart pertain to individuals in four-person families. If your family has more or less than four, total the "individual" figures and make these adjustments (note: larger families tend to buy and use food more economically than smaller ones):

—For a one-person family, add 20 percent.

—For a two-person family, add 10 percent.

—For a three-person family, add 5 percent.

—For a fiveor six-person family, subtract 5 percent.

—For a family of seven or more, subtract 10 percent.

Details of the four family food plans are available from the Nutrition Education Division, HNIS, USDA, Federal Building, Hyattsville, Md. 20782.

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